

Remarks given on the day Salt Lake City's anti-discrimination ordinances took effect

April 2, 2010

Mayor Mike Winder, West Valley City

Thank you, Mayor Becker.

Today fair minded people around the state applaud your city for prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and sexual identity in matters of housing and employment. I join that applause, and express my gratitude for the groundwork Salt Lake City has laid. The trail that you have blazed in creating ordinances that both prohibit discrimination and yet protect religious liberties is to be commended, and makes it easier for other cities to follow in this path.

As the mayor of your neighboring city, Utah's second largest city, I am pleased that my city council has joined me in asking our staff to prepare similar ordinances for us to consider in the near future. In West Valley City we have residents who have been discriminated against in housing and employment who have shared their stories. These citizens don't need special treatment, but they deserve the opportunity to seek shelter and to thrive or fail in a job based on their merits, and not to be prejudged because of their orientation.

Some have been perplexed that a Republican mayor like me would be in favor of these anti-discrimination ordinances. To that I say they do not truly understand the potential of the party of Abraham Lincoln, who taught us about human dignity and civil rights—that when the Declaration announces that all men are created equal and entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness that it applies indeed to *all* Americans. We may disagree with a neighbor's lifestyle or preferences or acting on tendencies they were born with, but a Lincoln Republican would not seek to make second-class citizens out of anybody.

Standing up against discrimination, and prejudice, and bigotry is not a Republican virtue alone; for it is an American virtue. And when I place my hand over my heart and pledge “with liberty and justice for all”, I mean what I say.

It has been chilling to hear those that say “If I own an apartment building, and am morally opposed to homosexuals, please allow me to evict and not rent to those kinds of people. After all, aren’t there other places in town where gays can live?” It is as if a voice from Jim Crow America was haunting us from a dusty history book saying, “Please don’t allow those folks with a different skin color in my housing development. Aren’t there plenty of other places in town where their kind can live?” Such attitudes are not dissimilar from a shop owner that refuses to hire Catholics or Jews, or a restaurant that refuses to serve Asians. These attitudes of group hate are wrong and un-American.

Some have been perplexed that a Mormon like me would be in favor of these anti-discrimination ordinances. To that I say they do not truly understand the teachings of Jesus Christ as I have been taught in my church. I have been taught that we should love one another. That charity suffereth long, and is kind. That we should do unto others as we would want done unto us. I don’t know about you, but I sure wouldn’t want to lose my job, or have my family lose their housing because of my sexual orientation.

Standing up against discrimination, and prejudice, and bigotry is not a Christian virtue alone; for it is humanity’s virtue. And even if you believe different from me and behave different from me, you are still my brother or my sister in the family of man. And in Salt Lake City today, and soon in West Valley City and elsewhere, we will continue our human family’s journey toward dignity.

Thank you.